institutions and universities in India and U.S.A. The India-U.S. Science and Technology Forum was established in 2000 to catalyse India-U.S. scientific collaboration.

Telephone facilities in the villages of Himachal Pradesh

*69. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of villages in Himachal Pradesh which have not been provided with telephone facilities as yet, district-wise; and

(b) by when this facility is likely to be provided?

. THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) and (b) Out of a total 16925 villages in Himachal Pradesh, 16585 villages haves already been provided with telecom facilities as on 31.3.2003. Out of the uncovered 340 villages, 61 villages are de-populated. Remaining 279 villages in Himachal Pradesh are without telephone facility. District -wise details are as under:—

Circle	Name of District	No. of uncovered Villages
Himachal	Shimla	18
Pradesh	Kullu	0
	Hamirpur	1
	Bilaspur	12
	Lahaul & Spiti	33
	Chamba	52
	Kangra	41
	Kinnaur	16
	Solan	7
	Sirmour	33
	Mandi	66
	Una	0
	Total:	279

All these villages are planned to be provided with telephone facility on satellite based Village Public Telephones (VPTs) during 2003-04 subject to availability of funds and equipment in time.